



**Connecticut State  
Colleges & Universities**

---

Mark E. Ojakian  
*President*

September 18, 2019

Speaker Aresimowicz  
House Majority Leader Ritter  
House Minority Leader Klarides  
President Pro Tempore Looney  
Senate Majority Leader Duff  
Senate Minority Leader Fasano  
Legislative Office Building  
300 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Leaders of the Connecticut General Assembly:

We are currently working on developing guidelines to enact the debt-free college program that passed in HB 7424, Section 362, during the previous session. However, we are growing increasingly concerned about the viability of its funding source as well as the timing of acquiring that funding.

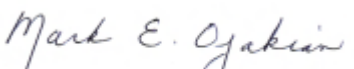
The legislation stipulates that the governor is to consult with the CT Lottery Corporation to determine the feasibility of using an iLottery as a funding source, for the debt free college program. Even if this new lottery revenue was determined feasible, the timing is concerning since enabling legislation is required. Further, should this enabling legislation pass next May, there will not be adequate time to begin a marketing campaign and the collection of revenue to fund the scholarships in time for the fall 2020 semester.

The legislation also requires the governor and the legislature to allocate resources should this funding source not yet be available or viable. To that end, the Board of Regents has formally requested an additional \$20,090,876 be included in Governor Lamont's FY 20-21 technical budget adjustments schedule to fund this program. This \$20 million request includes \$2 million to plan and execute a robust marketing effort to drive enrollment, \$1.4 million for additional advisors and \$16.6 million for student grants.

Our research has shown that in other states with similar programs, marketing efforts began at least a full year before the launch of the program. Additional staff and support services were also put in place ahead of time to afford the influx of new students more support and better chances of completing their programs. The current need for additional academic advisors to better serve our existing students is only exacerbated under the implementation of debt-free college.

As we begin to build the infrastructure, it is imperative to the success of the program that the legislature and the Office of Policy and Management find a sustainable funding source.

Sincerely,

  
Mark Ojakian, President

Connecticut State Colleges and Universities